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Contemporary Explorations

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Contemporary Explorations

The four articles in this section were selected because they contain a great deal of information on different areas of importance—e.g., current practice issues, models—and because they have stimulated further thinking in these areas. The first article is “Sociology, Social Work and Social Problems” by David Kallen, Dorothy Miller and Arlene Daniels. Published in 1968, the article suggests a coming “rapprochement” between sociology and social work.

At almost every professional meeting on sociological practice, some sociologists will ask about the relationship between sociology and social work. Someone will want to know why the early women scholar-practitioners are remembered as social workers while the male university professors are remembered as scientists and sociologists. Others will want to address contemporary issues such as overlap of interests, differences in theoretical orientations, differences in training requirements and the effect of credentialing by these fields.

This article only begins to address a few of these issues but does provide insight about the ways in which the fields have “avoided a social change responsibility” and information about their potential contributions to solving social problems.

The second article is James Laue’s “Sociology as Advocacy: There are No Neutrals,” an excerpt from his 1978 chapter “Advocacy and Sociology.” Laue, known particularly for his work on ethics and on conflict intervention, has written what might be called a primer for sociologists. Here Laue explains that “doing sociology in all its forms is social intervention, and that all intervention is advocacy of one of three types—of party, outcome or process.”

The third article in this section, Roger Straus’ “Changing the Definition of the Situation: Toward a Theory of Sociological Intervention,” is one of the more important contemporary articles in the field of clinical sociology. In his 1984 paper, Straus presents a taxonomy of sociological intervention that pays special attention to varying levels of participation and relates these to intervention targets.

The final article is Joseph DeMartini’s “Basic and Applied Sociological Work,” which is excerpted from a longer article by that name which appeared in 1982. In this article DeMartini defines applied sociology and presents a typology of basic and applied sociological work.